

Better

PONTEVEDRA

on foot



Pontevedra has been selected to receive the INTERMODES 2013 Prize for its exemplary intermodal passenger transport policy. Intermodes would particularly like to reward Metrominuto, the first 'public-transport-alike' pedestrian map in Europe

This magazine has been created by the Mayor's communications department, after having been awarded the 2013 Intermodes Prize (Brussels, February, 6th 2013).
Photographic credits by: Guillermo González and Gustavo Santos. English version: Osmundo Barros and Tomás Costal. Printed by GTI. February 2013.

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Natalie Leclerc
'The urban model of Pontevedra is what we recognize with the prize'





Care and sensibility



Believing in the internal strength this city can generate was the main energy invested on the transformation of Pontevedra. Treating its streets and squares, its architectural heritage, and its natural wealth with care and sensibility was the starting point of this transformation that the citizens aspire to and drive.

Inspired by a global model of alternative city, we made the necessary decisions to place people at the centre of urban life, being convinced that it was the best way to achieve optimum levels of quality in order to live in a harmonious and interesting environment.

In this way, the different plans that permitted to increase the public space for people were created. Infrastructure plans, such as the integral reform of the public space that improved footways, squares, pavements, services, and underground conduits...

And also cultural plans such as the promotion of the walking habit and a whole culture in which people and their simpler and more natural mobility are in the centre of attention, relegating cars to essential uses.

The prize granted by the European agency Intermodes is an honour for contemporary Pontevedra. Thank you for your appreciation and your attentions. It is a real incentive for us to go on working with humility, abnegation, and common sense. We know another world is possible, so we began by making it possible for the city to live with the healthy and legitimate intention of improving.

Miguel Anxo Fernández Lores
Mayor of Pontevedra



Territory

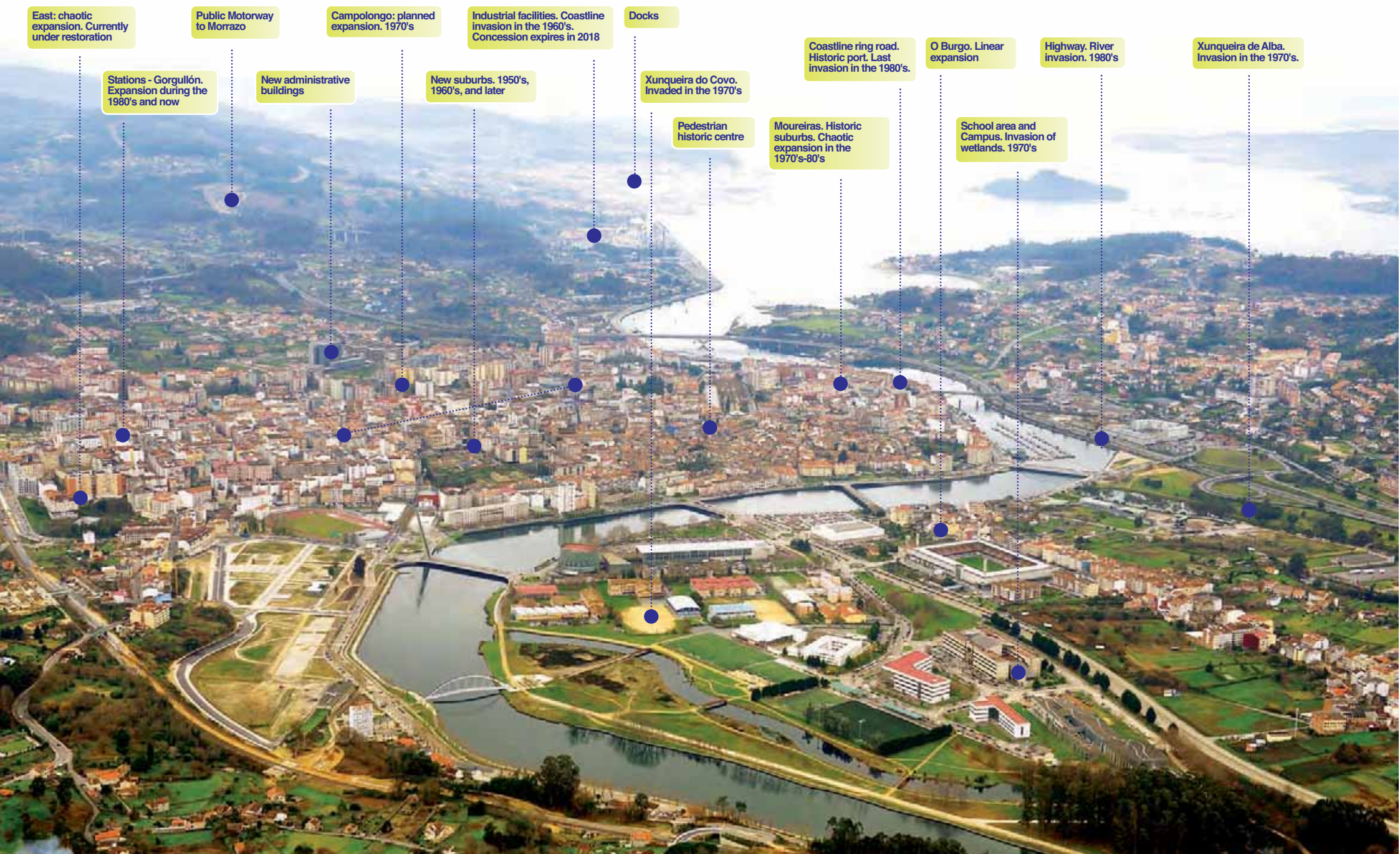


The city was erected on a not very high rocky promontory; it is surrounded by the river Lérez, just at the point where it merges into the waters of the Estuary of Pontevedra, open to the Atlantic Ocean.

It is located at the centre of the Rías Baixas, on the Atlantic Axis, at the same distance from Porto and A Coruña, and from Vigo and Vilagarcía, in the most densely populated area in Galicia.

Apart from the Lérez, other rivers flow in the capital city, such as Rons, Valdecorvos, and Gafos. The salt marshes of Alba, Lérez, and Mollavao, albeit reduced by landfills, create important wetlands very close to the urban area. The interior part of the estuary is an intertidal area with plenty of shellfish as well as natural interest.

Its oceanic climate offers temperature values of between 13-6°C in January and 26-15°C in August. It rains an average of 15 days in January and 5 days in August.





The River Lérez mouth, which forms the Pontevedra estuary, outlines the city's profile

A compact city

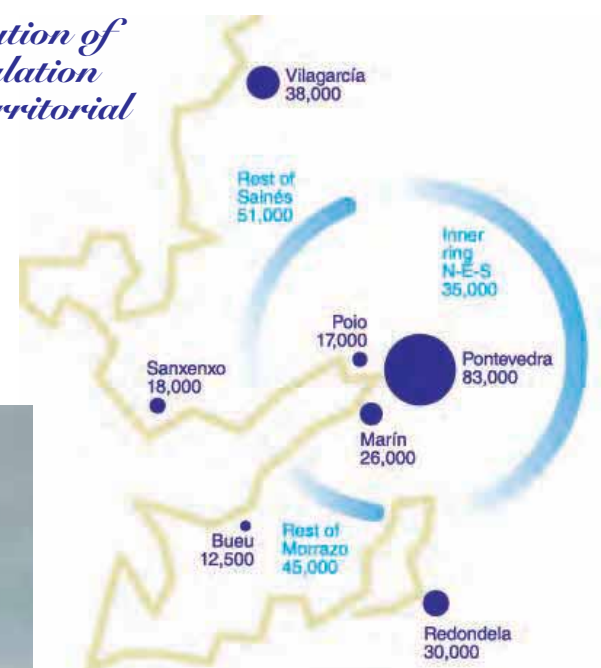


The population in the surroundings of Pontevedra live in several small urban centres, some of them very close to the capital. The population is scattered in small settlements spread over the landscape.

The capital is a compact and flat city. It is the commercial and service centre of the Rías Baixas Area; its tertiary economy is based on services related to its capital status (administrative, health, judicial, military), as well as commerce and leisure.

In the district there are food, automotive, construction and tourism industries. Several high level university and sport centres complete the socioeconomic scenario. The primary sector is mainly related to forestry.

Distribution of the population in the territorial area



Seat of the Xunta de Galiza (Autonomic government)



Asphalt speed bumps, very frequent around the city

46

Millions of motorized movements are studied in the capital every year, mainly from the most populated areas (North, South, and West)

54,741

Total number of motor vehicles registered in the municipality of Pontevedra

40,203

Cars registered in the capital

6,533

Mopeds and motorcycles registered

117

Buses registered for collective transport of people

1,285

Intermodal car/pedestrian parking spaces for free, in the surroundings of the city, a few minutes walk distance from the central area

4,437

Spaces in conventional fee-based parking lots

7,406

Parking spaces in public roads, all of them for free

19

Daily bus lines to and from Pontevedra

XX

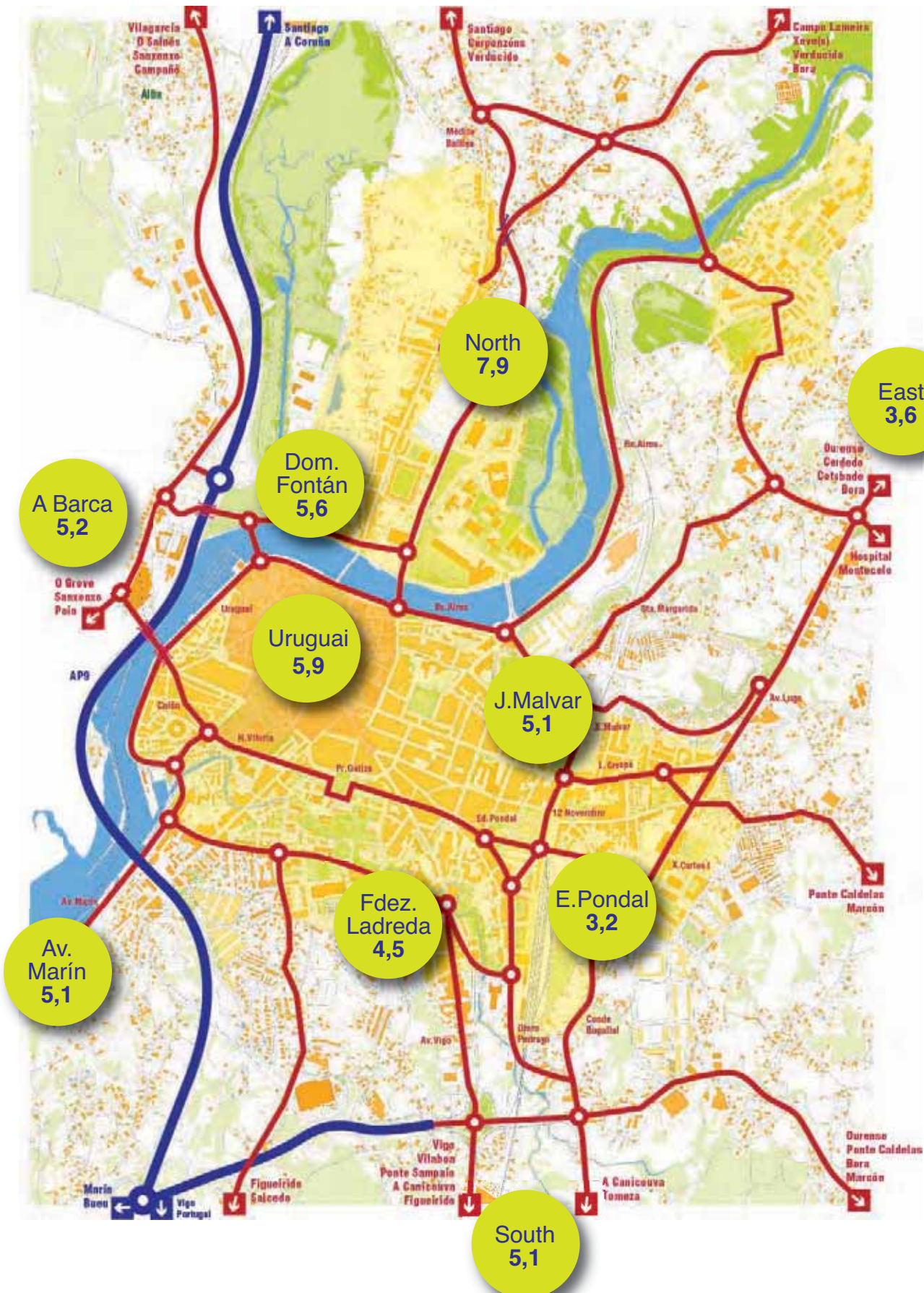
Passengers using the Bus Station

762,000

Passengers using the Railway Station per year

Motorized circulation

Millions of movements per year are registered in different points of the urban network

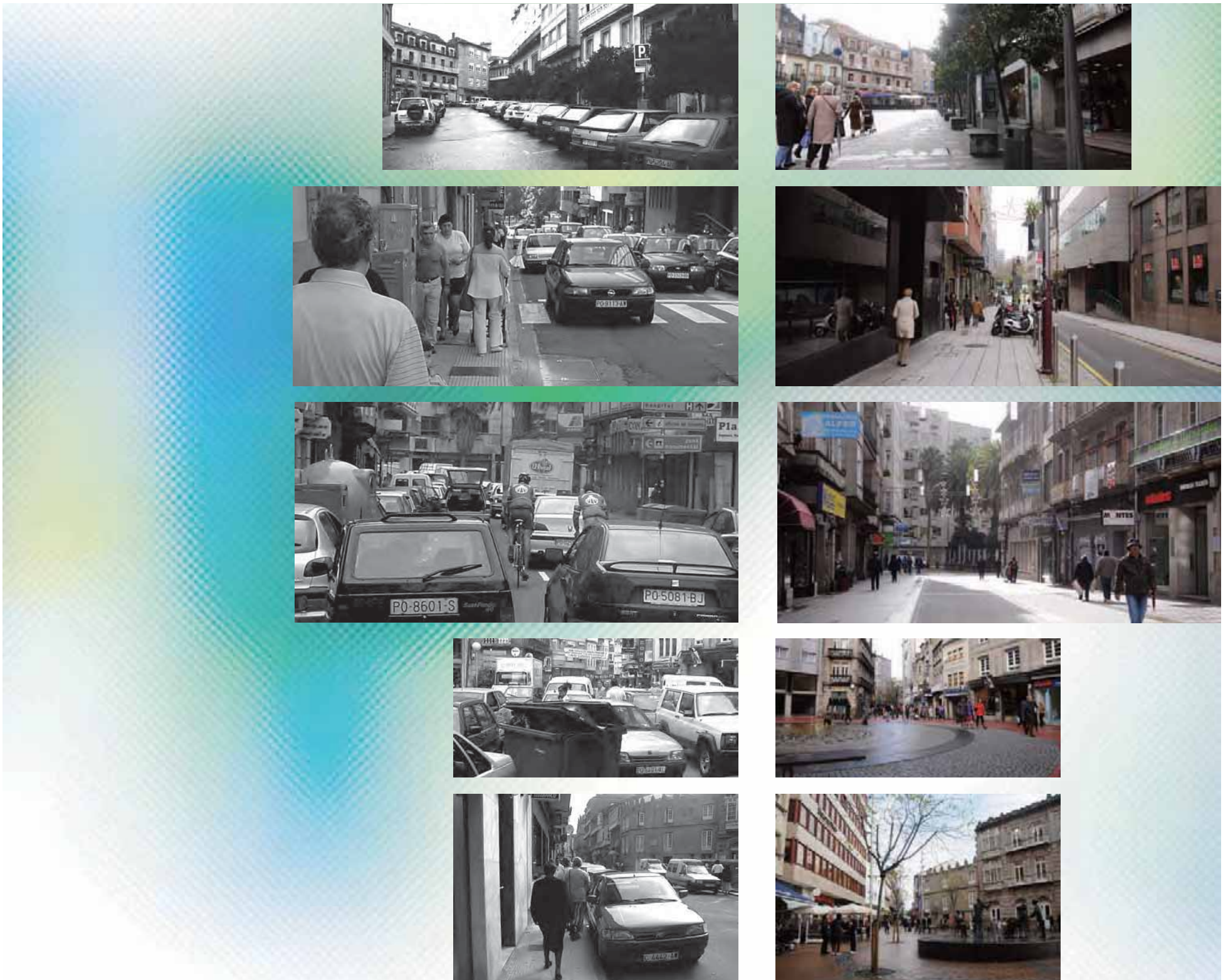




Photographs show the 'then and now' situation in different places of the city. They reflect the significant scope of the urban reform that started in 1999 and meant the recovery for pedestrians of a large space that was previously occupied by cars.

The urban reform

Started in the late 90's, it meant a radical alteration of urban mobility, which until then had been based on the excessive use of private cars.



The modality of urban transport

66% on foot or by bike
 4% public transport
 30% private car



Less by car, more on foot

After pedestrianization, the space previously occupied by cars is now used by pedestrians; universal accessibility was generalized to promote the independent life of people with mobility challenges. The strengthening of the central area for commercial and administrative activities prevented the construction of shopping centres in the surroundings and thousands of motorized movements.

Universal accessibility extends throughout the public urban space.

The management of mobility



Some schools in the Historic Centre profit from the public spaces and use them as a playground, which is safe for the pupils

A worthy public space

The transformation of Pontevedra was equally inspired by the 'City of Children' of Francesco Tonucci, for the purpose of promoting a healthier, happier childhood, combined with the generalization of 'traffic calming' in the whole urban space. The work 'Calmar el tráfico', by Alfonso Sanz, was one of the main inspirations for the reform.

The administrative organization of mobility

Almost all the areas of municipal management are related to mobility



Pedestrian preference

After limiting the presence of cars in the city, a substantial amount of public space was gained and big pedestrian routes were created, with broad areas of preference for movements on foot.

Moving without an engine —on foot or by bike— in Pontevedra is very easy, healthy, and safe. Cars are not a permanent threat any more, since streets are crowded, roads have been narrowed and physical obstacles have become widespread. It was the first city to reduce top speed to 30 km/h.



metrominuto Pontevedra



The city on foot: times and distances

Average walking times in the city. A speed of 5 km/h has been estimated

Just by looking at the colour of the lines the average times and distances become more accessible

Intermodality is focused on pedestrians

The intermodal system to transport people is based on the priority of non-motorized movements. There is a big strip of free parking space at one end of the centre, with capacity for one thousand vehicles, which works as a car/pedestrian exchanger for people coming from out of the capital who can leave their cars at 10 minutes walking distance from most areas of civic activity.



Transporte público de pasaxeiros



Public transport of passengers map

Bus and railway intermodal node

Bus and railway stations work as a single communications node, and the interdistrict collective transports that come into the city have stops at the main points of their routes. The connection between the city centre and the stations can be made through conventional routes or through the Gafos river park, a pedestrian route filled with vegetation.

Most bus lines coming into the city, with about 50 stops in the urban area, have this passenger centre as their origin or destination. Public transport of passengers
Pedestrian path Gafos River Station-Centre

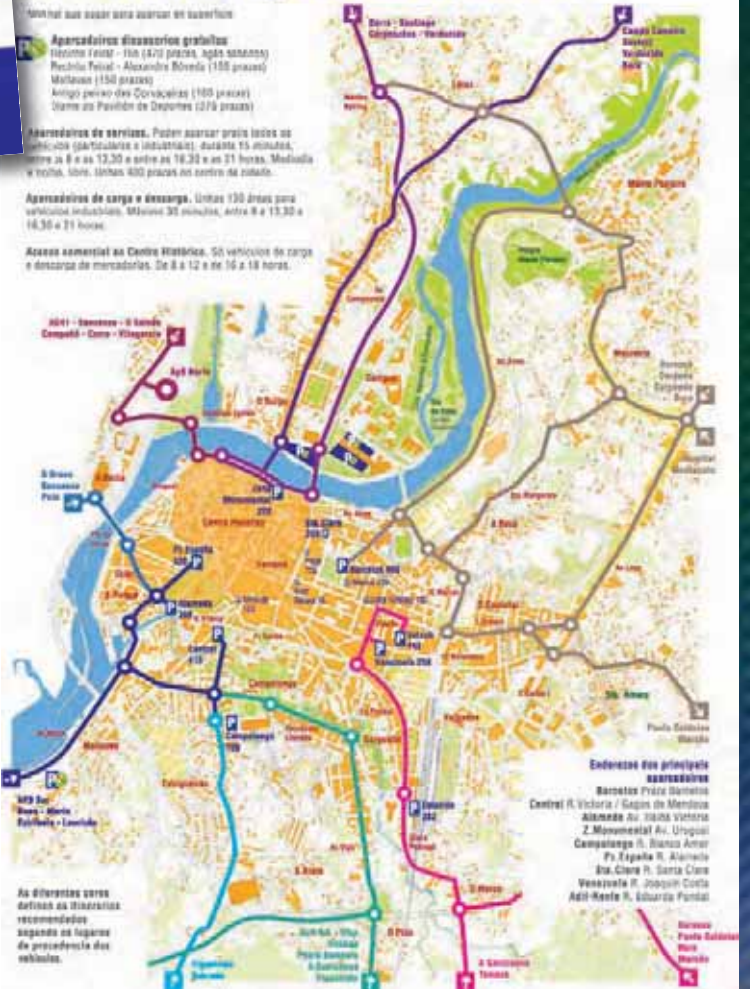


Smart parking

Apart from free intermodal parking lots, the surface parking system permits 15 minutes stays during business hours in the whole city, as well as broad supply hours in pedestrian areas. The whole urban centre is surrounded by fee-based underground parking lots, with easy access from the periphery. In total, there are 13,131 parking spaces. This parking system permitted a noticeable reduction in motor traffic in the urban centre.



Rede de aparcadoiros



13,131 parking spaces

66% parking spaces for free (8,691)

34% paid parking spaces (4,440)



Free, for all vehicles

Working days from to 8.00 to 13.30 h., and from 16.30 to 21.00 h. Except services, 15 minutes only

There are more than one thousand free dissuasive intermodal parking spaces for private cars. The main ones are located at just 10 minutes walking distance from the urban centre, around the sports pavilion, the football stadium, the culture palace, the showground and the university campus.



Safe and integrated bikes

Bike circulation is compatible with motor traffic in the whole city, so the system avoids specific lanes for these vehicles. They circulate with no incidents through pedestrian areas and they have clearly sign-posted parking areas spread all over the city.



Móvete coa túa propia enerxía.

metrominuto Pontevedra

A pé vives máis.

PONTEVEDRA MOBILIDADE

CONCELLO DE PONTEVEDRA

Medidas salvavidas para ti.

CONCELLO DE PONTEVEDRA

Rúas seguras para ti.

CONCELLO DE PONTEVEDRA



1. 'Move with your own energy'
2. 'On foot, you live more'
3. 'Life-saving measures for you'
4. 'Safe streets for you'
5. 'Which wheels do you prefer?'

A constant informative and advertising effort for the citizens to sympathise with the transformations

Information helps

The infrastructure and organization policy is complete with a persuasive communication policy, both through conventional media and direct efforts, electronic communication, computer graphics, or creativity. In this sense, metrominuto was the main advertising element of the new pedestrian preference system of the city, which was aimed at demystifying the times required for movements on foot between any point of the city.

Rúas Joaquín Costa, A Estrada e Pintor Laxeiro

CONCELLO DE PONTEVEDRA

A reforma urbana dos eixos en 'V' que forman as rúas Joaquín Costa, Pintor Laxeiro e A Estrada consistiu en converter os espazos e a funcionalidade que presenta a rúa Joaquín Costa desde o seu inicio, na Rúa Sapeleiro, ata a zona de confluencia con rúa Casado.

Este espazo histórico central será do tipo verde e contará con todos os confortos necesarios para garantir a máxima fluidez e a máxima seguridade dos usuarios.

Os eixos principais serán:

- Estradas máis amplas
- Renovación de todos os servizos subterráneos
- Novo alumiar público
- Novo mobiliario urbano e servizos
- Carril de aparcadoiros e servizos
- Carril de circulación a motor
- Acceso en todo o momento

Querdes a hora de estender a reforma urbana ao resto da cidade, tiña que falois meditando nos últimos anos e que agora se completan con amplo apoio entre Juan Carlos I e a cidadá da cidade.

Un plan do Concello de Pontevedra concibido para que a mobilidade entre a cidade e o centro da cidade galea en comodidade, incrementando o valor das rúas e cooperando a seguridade cidadá dos tres vías reformatas.

Ademais da mellora do ambiente será de rúas, que beneficiará non só a cidadá?

- Incremento da seguridade e comodidade dos usuarios
- Incremento da seguridade e comodidade dos usuarios
- Incremento da seguridade e comodidade dos usuarios

Traffic culture

A full traffic education system at the elementary and intermediate levels provides school population with an intensive familiarization with mobility. Sessions with old age people, pregnant women, sportspeople, and people who need road re-education are also organized.

Literature on road safety has been incorporated. All pupils receive an illustrated children's novel, with a plot which has to do with road rage.



School visits to the Mobility Centre of the Local police are frequent.



'I'm mobile and my head is in the right place'

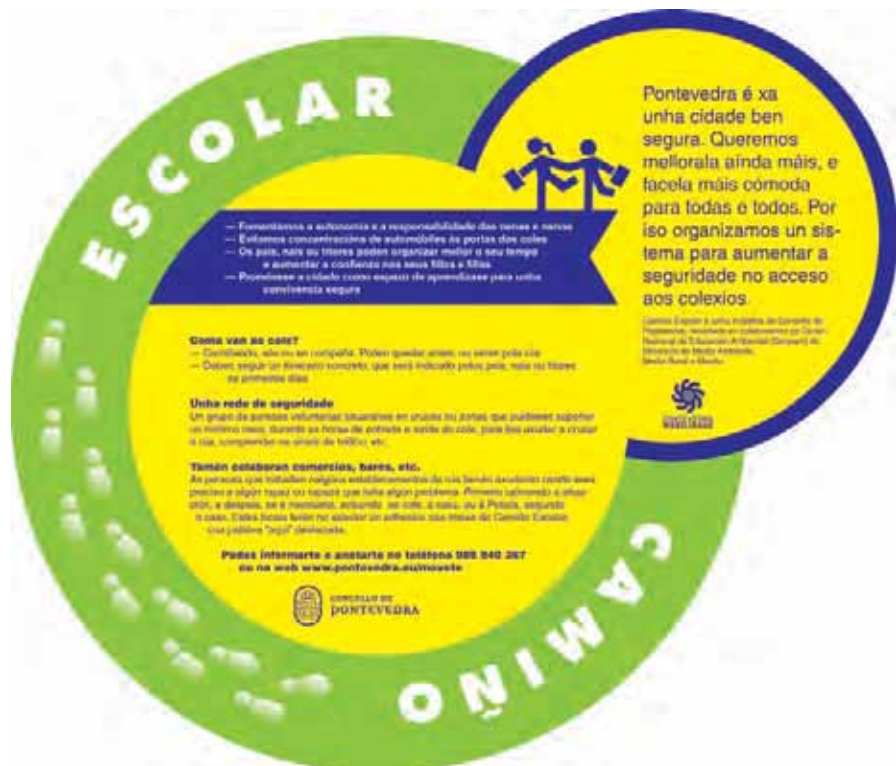


Several shops are involved in the School Route. The pupils can ask for help if need be

School Route

There is a system with mobility officers at the main crossroads of the city in school rush hours. Thus, children go to school on their own and they perceive the city as a friendly environment, with little risk. They acquire the values of sustainable mobility. Many retail outlets collaborate with School Route. Children can go there to ask for help, if necessary.

'School Route'
'The city, accompanies you to school'



'Help here!'



The results

Thanks to the new system, unnecessary motor traffic has been removed from the urban space, since 65% of movements are on foot or by bike.

Intermodality is based on the abandonment of motor vehicles for movements within the city. Most people come and leave their means of transport (train, bus, private car) to go to any internal destination on foot.

People can move more comfortably around the city without the pressure from cars, the city is more habitable and friendly for people, tertiary economic activity is favoured and centres of attraction for tourism and commerce are created.

The environmental improvement is unquestionable, since eliminating engine gases reduces the damage to atmosphere and it contributes to a healthy and more ecologically sustainable environment.

It improves road safety significantly, fulfilling the European objectives and the demands of a society organized against traffic violence, eliminating deaths in the transformed areas (virtually the whole urban area) and keeping a low level of incidents, with very few serious episodes.





Recognition

The Pontevedra urban model, apart from being the subject of public presentations, sessions and work meetings in different places of the Iberian Peninsula, has been granted several awards.

Among them, the **2007 Cermi Prize**, granted by the Confederación Estatal de Personas con Discapacidad (CEPD; State Confederation of Disabled People). A meaningful prize, since it was awarded by the very people who face mobility challenges and have organised themselves in the legal form of this state-wide association.

The **2008 Premio Nacional da Cultura Galega** (National Prize of Galician Culture), in recognition of the urban transformation and sensible management of the city's valuable historic and architectural heritage.

The **2010 Fundación Fesvial de Seguridad Vial** (Urban Safety) Award, granted by a jury in which the major mobility and security-related institutions of the Spanish State were represented, as well as private companies and road safety NGOs.

The **Mobilidad Segura (Safe Mobility) Prize** in the II Meeting of Cities for Road Safety, held in Córdoba under the auspices of the Dirección General de Tráfico (DGT, the official Spanish body which supervises road safety), for having reduced road accidents in the capital to a historic minimum.

The current **2013 Intermodos Prize** for an intermodal transport policy based on pedestrian mobility is the main recognition from an institution linked to the European Union in relation to the alternative city model represented by Pontevedra.

*'Intelligent Mobility', 'Healthy City',
mottos for the European Mobility
Weeks*



The whole Historic Center has been declared a pedestrian area. Cars are only allowed to circulate for essential services



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF METROMINUTO

Priority of the pedestrian mode in urban mobility and intermodality

César Mosqueira Councillor of Mobility and Infrastructure

1 The urban mobility

In our society, mobility needs are growing; roads, highways, subways, trains, ports, airports, are increasing their capacity and try to meet, separately or connected to one another, increasingly higher demands; safety and comfort of infrastructures and means of transport are higher and higher.

This optimistic outlook radically breaks when we enter the urban world. Mobility problems, both for goods and passengers, in the urban world are still unresolved; furthermore, we could say that in the last decades the situation has remained stationary at best, and, generally speaking, it has evolved negatively.

— *Mobility has improved a lot in the last decades as regards infrastructures and means of transport. The exception is urban mobility, which remains in the same poor situation, or even worse*

2 Is there a solution for urban mobility?

Something, or a lot, must have been done wrong so that the big investments made and the actions of all kinds which have been taken have not had a positive impact on urban mobility. All kinds of measures have been tested with unimpressive results.

Blue Zones, ORA, reversible lanes, reduction of footways, underpasses and overpasses for pedestrians, overpasses for traffic, green waves, dissuasive parking, smart traffic lights, charges to enter the city, parity of license plates, restrictions to pedestrian flows, public transport improvement, ... and a long list of this kind of measures, were announced as solutions, and in certain cases they may have implied an improvement, but the general problem of urban mobility and urban road safety is still a serious unresolved problem.

When a problem like this, which has been addressed to with different and varied proposals and approaches, with multiple resources and measures, still has no solution, it is certainly because there is one or more conceptual and structural aspects that are not being addressed.

We are not focusing on issues such as the higher demand of mobility, the increase in the number of motor vehicles, the population concentration and the activity in cities or metropolitan areas, the longer distances between residential areas and work areas, the design of new cities, and so on. These facts are invariable parameters, or, at least, they change very slowly and with difficulty; there have been attempts to design parts of cities, and even whole cities, for vehicles, and, over time, mobility problems ended up being similarly serious.

— *Some variable, deep, structural, conceptual root cause is still unresolved as regards urban mobility. If these background problems are not addressed, specific measures will fail as they did in the past.*

3

The priorities of urban mobility modes are inverted

We are thinking about the huge and deeply unfair disproportion in the consideration, both real and official, of the different types of mobility, in the supposed rights acquired by individual vehicles, by tourism, on each and every means of transport. This is the big unresolved background problem that is hampering all the actions taken to improve urban mobility and safety, as well as reducing urban quality, the quality of life in cities.

All the other means of transport have suffered a serious deterioration in their functionality: bikes, public transport, pedestrians, and even, indirectly, trains and subways. Of all these means of mobility, those that suffered the most with the supremacy of cars were pedestrians and bikes. The latter were about to disappear from our cities (we are trying to recuperate them), and pedestrians have been limited in such a way that they have almost become marginal (we are also trying to recuperate them, often following medical advice).

The balance among the different modes of urban mobility is deeply, radically and unfairly biased towards individual motor vehicles. This is the root cause that must be addressed



The Lerez walkway, an eight-kilometre path along the river

4

Pedestrian mobility

Pedestrian mobility is the most basic and natural of them all; it is the most important and, moreover, it is absolutely irreplaceable. All the artificial forms of mobility can be substituted, in cities, by other alternatives. The only one that is absolutely natural and biological cannot be substituted.

Motorized mobility was a huge advance that allowed us to get further away in less time, but its functionality was so invasive that it created the illusion that it could replace the natural ways of displacement.

Walking for some minutes, apart from being very natural and healthy, is inherent to the human being, except when there is any physical impairment.

But, apart from these characteristics, it is the most logical way to move in an urban environment, at least within a reasonable range, distance and time.

And where walking is not enough to be the only means of mobility, it must be important to combine it with others.

Pedestrian mobility is the healthiest and most natural way to move in an urban environment when the distances and times required do not exceed some limits, for instance 3 km or 40 minutes. Considering that this kind of displacements are done on foot would be the decisive factor for the global improvement of urban mobility. In displacements that involve more distance or time, the pedestrian mode must also be a decisive component; it must be the central axis of intermodality

5

The urban road network

Efforts and attention were focused, almost exclusively, on the improvement, always unattainable, of motor traffic, and the problems of pedestrian circulation were completely abandoned. The result was that urban roads became inhospitable and dysfunctional for pedestrians, which contributed decisively to the abandonment, or rather the restriction, of pedestrian mobility. It can never be abandoned, because that is not possible. Bearing in mind how urban roads have been treated, if it had been possible, then it would have been abandoned in the same way as cycle mobility.

Ridiculous footways, barriers and non assumable detours, fences to confine pedestrians, dull overpasses and underpasses, invasion of footways by parked cars, lighting directed to the road, leaving footways in the dark... these were the consequences of this background approach, of the priority granted to motorized mobility.

Finally, we do not have to do a deep search in newspaper libraries to find out that a road in bad conditions is an important public problem, while a footway in bad conditions is hardly ever as relevant. Another symptom: public works are permanently criticized because they affect motor traffic; pedestrians, who suffer more due to public works, are seldom mentioned.

Pedestrian mobility should have at least the same importance as road traffic as regards regulations and design, sustainability and management of urban roads. This is a big challenge for administrations and citizens alike if we want to recover a natural order in the different kinds of mobility. Pedestrians' needs must be incorporated as an essential variable



6

Balance between the different mobilities

The principle of treating pedestrian traffic and motor traffic equally must be put into practice in a consistent way. The acceptance of this principle would be useless if specific measures are not implemented.

There is much to improve in the design characteristics and maintenance of pedestrian ways, but there is more as regards the core concept. It is difficult to provide definite technical specifications for all cases, but it is very easy to establish a clear and equitable principle: in the streets where pedestrian traffic and motor traffic are segregated, the space, the surface devoted to motor traffic and parking should never exceed a half of the total surface, with some exceptions that will be mentioned later. And it should be understood as a generous rule for road traffic, since all the other uses of roads would have to be contented with the other half. Street lamps, dustbins, garbage containers, benches, cantilevers, terraces, disable almost 2 m; if we also consider cycle lanes, where, that 50% subtracted from road traffic may leave rather precarious ways for pedestrians. Anyway, there should be at least 2.5 m totally free, that is, 4 m in gross. If the road cross-section is not enough for this kind of footways, the only alternative is that the road becomes a single platform, with reduced, slow traffic and preference given to pedestrians.

The different kinds of mobility, particularly road mobility and pedestrian mobility, must receive an equitable treatment in urban roads; the reserve for road traffic should never exceed a half of the total street surface

7

The 'right' to park

The assumed principle that 'surface parking is a scarce asset that must be distributed equally' usually involves a series of actions that could be summarized as 'once all public space has been occupied for parking, this is still scarce' and, therefore, all the other uses and occupations of public spaces, some of which are more interesting for urban quality and mobility, are restricted in favour of parking. Going to the source, the approach should be 'public space is a scarce asset in high demand that must be distributed among the different uses in an equitable way'.

The assumed right to park in public spaces must become one of the rights existing in public roads in equal terms, losing its almost monopolistic privilege, through a regulation of the uses of public spaces that is equitable and gives priority to collective interest against individual interest



Intermodal system of pedestrian priority

1. Pedestrians
2. Bikes
3. Public transport
4. Private cars



8

The concept of necessity

There is a universal consensus on the fact that motor traffic in cities causes serious problems and harm: atmospheric and acoustic pollution, saturation of urban roads, traffic jams, severe discomfort, if not impossibility for other kinds of mobility. On the other hand, the car is a part of our civilization and it has meant a substantial advance; it is necessary and cannot be prohibited in the urban environment; the solution should be a rational use, that is, a more balanced alternative. We must search for and find a solution to this dichotomy.

A central issue, the nodal issue, will be to define the concept of 'necessity' or 'necessary service' in a reasonable, equitable, and assumable way. That is, establishing the line that separates when the use of motor mobility, particularly the private one, is necessary, and, therefore, is justified and allowed. When driving or parking in public spaces is not necessary, then, it should not be justified or allowed.

The compatibilization, the balance between the use of the car in cities and the reduction of the problems caused by its abuse, is determined by the clear, sharp fixation of the concept of 'necessity' in a socially assumed way and with operating solutions. Traffic is reduced to assumable and manageable intensities

9 About speeds

In the traffic of a city, where contingencies such as children who separates from their mother, an absent-minded pedestrian, a car that manoeuvres incorrectly, sudden stops, forced or not, permitting maximum speeds that may cause accidents with tragic consequences is a kind of Russian roulette that should be eradicated. With some exceptions, top speed of 30 km/h seem appropriate; danger and noise can be reduced significantly.

But effective compliance is even more important. Traffic signs with a reasonable speed limit are useless if a certain percentage of drivers, say 10% or 15%, do not respect them; they may produce even more danger and noise: risky overtaking manoeuvres, horn noises. The reality is that, in order to ensure these moderate speeds, it is necessary, at least at this moment, to resort to physical elements to slow down traffic.

On the other hand, danger and the lack of safety on urban roads cannot be measured by the number of accidents and victims; the feeling of lack of safety is not as tragic as the effects on victims, but it seriously deteriorates quality of life in cities and limits the autonomy of weaker people, particularly children, who cannot explore and dominate their environment autonomously.

Moderate maximum speeds must be established in all urban areas where other existing uses may cause accidents and, most of all, these limits must be enforced with the necessary physical measures.

10 Social dynamics

When a process to rebalance the uses of urban public spaces is started, a rebalance between the pedestrian mobility mode and the motor mobility mode, there is a reaction, in different degrees, that reminds people of that maxim of the late Franco period: 'We can have a democracy when the Spanish people are ready'.

The opponents to this rebalance of mobility are a minority; they use arguments such as: 'yes, but when there is enough parking space', 'yes, but when there is a consensus', 'yes, but when public transport improves', when..., when..., when... The privileged mobility mode, the motorized individual mode, resists losing its prebends even for the sake of a rebalance, a general improvement of both mobility and urban safety and quality.

The recovery of pedestrian mobility, the rebalance among the different mobility modes can never be conditioned to futures or other actions. We would be delaying the solution to an urgent problem without a time horizon



11 Thirteen years of experience

In Pontevedra, the implementation process has advanced considerably; the whole city has a speed limit of 30 km/h with the corresponding physical barriers. Clear principles and concepts, and coherence in their application, have been critical for the success of the process; the fact that the process is in an advanced stage lets us draw conclusions, many of them definitive, and see things very clearly, although implementation is not complete.

Urban quality and the quality of pedestrian and cycle mobility are high, and this has not restricted the functioning of the city. On the contrary, the city is more attractive and safer, and it works better; everyone who "needs" to move around to deliver supplies or transport passengers can do it much more easily than in the previous situation.

According to the Mobility Study 2011, two thirds of urban displacements correspond to pedestrians, and even so, the volume of car displacements can be reduced in favour of pedestrians, because there is still a lot of traffic that does not fulfil any of the reasons that can be considered as valid, and, therefore, it cannot be incorporated to the concept of "necessity".

On the other hand, accident rates are very low; there have been no deaths or serious injuries in the transformed areas for 13 years.

The improvement of urban quality, urban mobility, and safety is huge when we act following the criteria described above



Three large waterways surround the city: Alba, Gafos and Lérez, which originates in the Island of Covo



12 A total inversion of priorities

Prioritizing pedestrian mobility clearly, with the resulting restriction of road traffic, taking action on parking, and establishing the concept of 'necessity', motor traffic intensities become manageable, surface public transport stops having problems, and cycle mobility gets comfortable, coexisting both on the road with slow traffic and in promenades and footways.

We are aware that every city has a different size and different characteristics, but we cannot see any convincing reason why these principles of action are not valid for every city. At the most, bigger cities would have to be divided into sectors and certain specific urban areas, which are delimited by the main roads and have inter-zone functions, should receive a special treatment; but most areas are wide, consistent, and have no bottlenecks in intersections with these partially excluded roads.

Our experience shows that the solution to urban mobility and safety results from absolutely prioritizing pedestrian mobility among all the other types of urban mobility

13 As an afterword

On a report about 'What cities sound like', the conclusion drawn by the authors was that, in the extensive areas of Pontevedra treated according to these criteria, the dominant sounds are bird trills and the voices of children. It may seem idyllic, bucolic, strange, and unreal, but the truth is that it really is that way; visitors used to other urban environments are surprised about the prevalence of the sounds mentioned, or, when children or birds cannot be heard, the low ambient noise.

The advantages as regards urban quality and road safety are so evident, deep, and verifiable that they largely make up for the effort and remove the possible initial reserves. We are convinced that this is the way to go for mobility and safety in cities; that the solution will only result from a clear primacy, albeit not exclusivity, of pedestrian mobility in urban environments.



‘Walking is the first means of transport’

‘Intermodality, including pedestrians, is one of the priorities of the city’



Pontevedra received the Intermodes Prize, a European award granted to the

best mobility policies. Nathalie Leclerc, one of the jury members, explains the reasons for the selection.

‘The urban model of Pontevedra is what we recognize with the prize’

Intermodes started in 2009 to recognize the European communities that ‘stand out for their political will and their creativity to improve mobility’. In 2013, for the first time this prize was awarded to a city: Pontevedra. The executive director and co-founder of the organizing company (in conjunction with the European Union), Nathalie Leclerc, explains the reasons for this international recognition.

To start with, what kind of projects does de Intermodes award recognize?

The main criteria are intermodality, originality of mobility policies, easy implementation, sustainability, eco-behaviour, interconnection of means of transport and organization.

You selected Metrominuto, designed by the Town Council, seemingly the first pedestrian map in Europe. Why?

The well being of pedestrians and disabled people is an important step towards a better mobility and this is the first ecological network of mobility proposed in Europe. Pontevedra was the first city that thought about it. This is a simple idea, yet a smart one, that must set an example for all Europe. Besides, it will let planners rethink the city for pedestrians. In Pontevedra, the pedestrian network integrates with the existing transport network, and it contributes to intermodality in a significant way.

The Council understood the award as a recognition of the Pontevedra urban model... Is this a correct interpretation?

Yes. The urban model developed by Pontevedra, which includes Metrominuto, is what we are recognizing with the prize. Intermodality, including pedestrians, is one of the priorities of the city. The sustainable mobility policy proposed by Pontevedra is what Intermodes recognizes.

The Council says they did not send any proposal. How did you get to know “Metrominuto”?

The role of Intermodes is to ensure the monitoring of everything that is done as regards intermodality. That control is done through participation in seminars, social networks, news about European communities on the Internet... That's how we knew about Metrominuto. We could not visit Pontevedra, but we got plenty of information through documents before choosing it as the best initiative.

Among the previous prize winners, we can find the mobility plan of the Olympic Games, and other initiatives where the beneficiaries are millions. However, this prize is awarded to a city with 80,000 inhabitants. Is this something accidental?

At the intermodality level, there are no big or small projects. Some audacious initiatives exist, and Metrominuto is one of them. This concept can easily be transferred to cities with 80,000 inhabitants, which are more common in Europe than big conurbations. The Pontevedra approach fits well with the international commitments of the EU for the reduction of greenhouse effect gas emissions and with the European laws on air quality. Walking is the first means of transport, so pedestrians must have special areas to move comfortably and in calm and safe conditions. Furthermore, walking is good for health and the environment. 83% of the Europeans still prefer to use their own car to move, but 30% of journeys in the city cover distances of less than 3 km, and 50% less than 5 km. Metrominuto is an alternative to short distance journeys, apart from being more ecological, cheaper, and healthier.

Do you think Pontevedra will benefit from this prize, beyond the international recognition?

The Intermodes prizes awarded previously had a significant impact on the winning community, and in this case, bearing in mind that cities of this size are more common in Europe than very big cities, we think that Metrominuto should serve as a reference for medium-sized cities, and even for small ones.

Does the prize include any kind of remuneration?

Unfortunately, it doesn't, Intermodes does not receive any kind of subsidy, so it cannot afford to distribute economic prizes. However, the prize is supported by a media campaign where the city and its exemplary mobility policy in Europe will stand out.





A city to be walked, with streets and squares





quares... not shopping centre corridors



Better PONTEVEDRA on foot



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